

## Contaminants remain at mill site

### State, ownerwork to cleanShasta property

By David Benda

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Nearly seven years after an offshore investment firm purchased it, state water quality officials are still negotiating a settlement with the owner to ensure the former Shasta Paper Co. mill property gets cleaned up.

Some envision the 375-acre site — larger than Stillwater Business Park's first phase — as a huge economic development opportunity, with its proximity to rail service and Interstate 5.

While some of the contaminated property has been cleaned up, state officials continue to work with owner Winnemucca Trading Company Limited to address some of the more serious problems, said Robert Crandall, assistant executive officer for the state's Regional Water Quality Board's Central Valley area.

"We want to make sure the entire soil and groundwater is properly cleaned up," said Crandall, who couldn't say when a settlement would be reached.

The property, which flanks Hawes Road southeast of Anderson, includes wastewater treatment lagoons that contain thousands of cubic yards of paper mill waste sludge.

Work that's been completed includes approximately 70 cubic yards of solids from white liquor waste that was removed from tanks and placed in lined storage containers.

The owners in December 2008 submitted a report for the removal of black liquor from a storage tank that was approved by state water quality officials.

Stockpiled lime also has been removed from the former mill site.

But among the work that still needs to be done is documentation that petroleum coke — a solid fuel produced from oil refineries' heavy residues — has been removed.

There are about 51 cubic yards of petroleum coke on the property.

There is no record of the removal of chemical materials housed in 11 additional aboveground storage tanks on the property, according to a report Crandall e-mailed to

the Record Searchlight.

The update didn't indicate the type of chemicals contained in the 11 tanks.

A remedy to close off two wastewater treatment lagoons north of Hawes Road that tests show contain dioxins also needs to be completed.

Crandall said the plan to remove the dioxins is more complex due to potential permitting issues and the potential construction of the on-site containment structure.

If Winnemucca decides to close the treatment lagoons, the chemicals would have to be hauled off-site, he said.

"Further, 118,200 cubic yards of sediment is, at a minimum, 4,782 truck trips," Crandall said. "Regardless of the final selected remedial alternative, it is likely a five-year process."

Winnemucca purchased the former mill property in May 2004 at a foreclosure auction for \$500,000.

Shasta Paper closed in August 2001 after nearly 40 years in business.

The closure left 400 jobless.

The former mill is adjacent to land owned by Roseburg Forest Products, which operated a sawmill on its property until 1993.

In September 2008, Crandall's predecessor, Jim Pedri, said that his agency was losing patience with Winnemucca's inaction. Pedri has since retired.

Winnemucca was warned it was subject to a \$3 million fine if it didn't speed up work on the contaminated property.

Crandall said the potential fine is still in play.

"We maintain a policy that we will enforce to the fullest extent possible," Crandall said. "Our goal is to try to accomplish cleanup with all the parties, but if there is no cooperation, we will use all the enforcement tools . . . to accomplish the job."

Crandall declined to characterize the level of Winnemucca's cooperation.

Asked why it is taking so long to reach an agreement and get the site cleaned up, Crandall said the complexity of the work, the legal circumstances and the additional problems that have popped up have prolonged the process.

"We want to make sure it is done right and we're not just hurrying through the project,"

Crandall said.

Sacramento attorney Jeff Scharff, who represents Winnemucca and is negotiating a settlement with the state, did not return a phone message left Friday at his office.



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